

Natural Resources Conservation & Development Board  
Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 26, 2009 at 3:00 p.m.

This meeting was held at the DNR Commissioner's conference room located at 550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ste 1400, Anchorage and by teleconference.

*Board members in attendance:*

Cheryl Thompson

Carol Kenley

Suzanne Fisler

Bernie Karl

George Woodbury (by telephone)

Gary Morrison, Alaska SWCD

Ryan Stencel, Alaska SWCD

Joni Scharfenberg, Fairbanks SWCD

Carrol Martin, Kenai SWCD

Sue True, Kenai SWCD

Janey Moen, AlaskaLink

Phil Naegele, NRCS

Bob McFarlane, Dept of Law

Greg Bell, Anchorage SWCD

Franci Havemeister, DNR

Catherine Inman, Wasilla SWCD

*Others in attendance:*

Shana Joy, DNR

Ken Marsh, AACD

Steve Hicks, AACD

Jerry Norum, Fairbanks SWCD

☐ Call to Order – Determination of Quorum

- It was determined that a quorum was present and the meeting was called to order by George Woodbury at 3:05 p.m.

☐ Approval of Agenda

- The board passed unanimously the agenda as presented.

☐ Approval of February 17, 2009 Meeting Minutes

- Bernie moved to approve the minutes as presented. Suzanne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

☐ Wood Bison Restoration Project Presentation by Randy Rogers, ADF&G

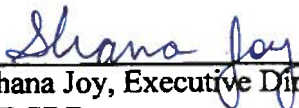
- Randy Rogers provided an informative overview and explanation of the wood bison project in Alaska by PowerPoint presentation and with accompanying informational materials.
- A small population of wood bison are currently housed at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center in Portage.
- The designation of wood bison as 'endangered' in the U.S. has caused concerns regarding future resource development anywhere the wood bison may be released into the wild.
- ADF&G is working with the EPA to get a special 10(j) rule designation for Alaska's population of wood bison which would designate them as a "nonessential experimental population." If this special rule can be obtained for the wood bison, it would remove many of the regulatory requirements for future development in areas where wood bison have been released.

- Currently, the Minto Flats area is being studied as a possible first site for release of the wood bison into the wild as well as other possible locations.
  - Health and disease testing is ongoing for the population at the AWCC.
  - The board has taken no action regarding this project at this time but has requested to be provided updates from ADF&G as they arise and has taken the project under serious consideration.
  - Comments from the Salcha Delta SWCD regarding the wood bison were provided to the board in writing for their consideration.
- Executive Director Report – Shana Joy
- HB 12 was last heard in the House Resources Committee on February 18<sup>th</sup>. It has not been moved out of that committee.
  - A draft capital projects funding proposal for SWCDs was presented to the board for their consideration. The Operational Agreement must be completed prior to implementation of this funding mechanism.
- AACD Funding Report – Steve Hicks
- Steve Hicks gave a brief report on the status of AACD's funding. A federal Omnibus bill was recently passed for \$864,000 (an earmark) which, as currently understood, would pass through NRCS to AACD under CTA. AACD should be able to remain functional but some districts find it difficult to utilize the funds that are structured in this manner.
  - Steve had visited with legislators in Juneau recently, but the status of any funding from the State is fluid at this point. Steve encourages the districts to stay in contact with their legislators and keep the district fresh in their minds. Concrete news may not be known until the last week of the legislative session (April 13-20).
  - Additional funding may be available through the USFS for invasive weeds programs. It would be tapping into some of the stimulus funding as a one-time source.
- NRCS Stimulus Funding – Phil Naegele
- Phil provided a brief overview of the programs that NRCS offers which will receive increased funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
    - Emergency Watershed Protection Program/Flood Plain easement program – may be some opportunities to contract with NRCS this summer. Accepting applications right now and ends April 10th.
      - May contract out for services such as site surveys, environmental evaluations, removing homes, and site decommissioning. Need certifications to perform this work.
    - Farm Bill Opportunities
      - TSP (technical service provider) work
    - Conservation Innovative Grants deadline has passed. Some districts did apply.

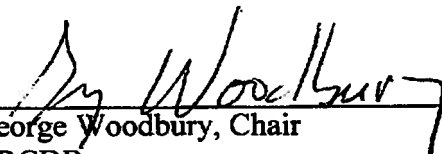
- CCPI (Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative) is an opportunity for districts to submit proposals. Phil provided a copy of the *Federal Register* announcing the program. There are eligibility requirements. Deadline is April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Deals with EQIP and WHIP programs.
    - Tribal conservation districts. Mountain Village recently signed up as a tribal conservation district.
    - NRCS audit completed recently. Language has been tightened up in agreements.
  - It is believed that the Federal Omnibus bill funding (\$864,000 earmark) will be available to the districts under CTA.
  - NRCS has requested \$10 million to complete the Delta Clearwater Watershed restoration project under the ARRA.
- Kenai SWCD Report – Sue True and Carrol Martin
- Sue provided an overview of the projects the Kenai SWCD has been working on.
    - Introduced Meg Mueller as the Kenai Peninsula/Anchorage area NRCS conservationist
    - Have hired an invasive plants coordinator and the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge has invited the district to work with them on an invasive plants program and outreach. An alternative plants brochure has been a success in educating the public.
    - CWMA (Homer, Kenai & Seward) are hosting a class in Seward this year - A one-day class on invasive/noxious weeds.
    - The purchase of equipment for cooperator use: a no-till drill, a Meri-crusher, and gardening equipment: 9 total pieces of equipment were purchased. A contractor is needed to handle the rentals of the equipment, maintenance etc... because they demand is so great.
    - The district also has available a DEC approved vegetable processing unit/portable kitchen which allows cooperators to prepare locally grown and produced items for sale, especially for the Saturday market.
    - The district prepares the soil for the community food bank garden every year and provides the plants. Serves as an educational plot as well as producing food for the community. The size is approximately one acre.
    - Composting is a new hit in their district for dog mushers.
    - Alaska Ag Day. The district adopted a school in the past. This year the event is moving to the rodeo grounds and hosting all of the local schools. District participation in school events and education curriculum is highly requested locally. Ag Day is May 5<sup>th</sup>.

- ☐ Draft Operational Agreement, Strategy, and Long Range Program Plan
  - The board has taken no action regarding this draft agreement at this time and will take it up again at the next meeting. The board is interested in feedback from the districts/AACD regarding it. This board will consider the document as the Alaska district and provide comments. Shana will distribute the most current version of the draft by mail to the districts right away for review.
- ☐ HB 70
  - No new discussion regarding this bill. Bernie moved to support the bill as it is currently presented. Suzanne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- ☐ Public Comments
  - Joni Scharfenberg, the state's Project W.E.T. coordinator from the Fairbanks district, would like to address the board in the future regarding support for natural resource education in schools. She will be invited to give a presentation at a future meeting.
- ☐ Board Comments
  - None were offered.
- ☐ Next Meeting Date and Location
  - The last week of May was suggested as the next meeting date after district annual work plans are submitted. Shana Joy will work on scheduling with the board and make an announcement soon.
  - The next meeting will be Wednesday May 27<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m.
- ☐ Adjournment
  - Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Minutes taken by:

  
Shana Joy, Executive Director  
NRCDB

Minutes approved by:

  
George Woodbury, Chair  
NRCDB